11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

eval. Such sights and sounds! A minstrel singing his subtle lyrics as he bows a one-stringed fiddle; in the dark interiors of church, barefoot deacons holding beeswax candles and swinging vessels of smoking incense; the pomp of a nobleman moving cross country with his crowded entourage; a young girl washing the feet of her father's guest; warriors boasting with their martial chants; the stately rhythms of clergy chanting and dancing under the mid-day sun; the open marketplace, offering all manner of livestock, grain, and spices; the counsel of an elder, resolving a dispute; the simple dignity of the bow when two men meet.

The scholar's job is of course to transcend such a medley of impressions and to discern the patterns of order through which such details are bound together in a living whole. In carrying out this task I have not imposed any one methodological framework on my materials. Rather, as the reader of Robert Redfield's methodological handbook, *The Little Community*, will readily appreciate, I have sought to organize these materials in terms of half a dozen of the more common viewpoints used in the study of human communities. Roughly speaking, I have looked upon Amhara culture as a history (chapter ii), an outlook on life (chapter iii), a way of growing up (chapter iv), a social structure (chapter v), a kind of psychological orientation (chapter vi), and as "a combination of opposites" (chapter vii). The observational techniques employed in the course of this study have been accordingly diverse, ranging from the analysis of literary texts and oral traditions to the use of questionnaires, projective tests, interviews, and participant observation.

Yet however gratifying the contemplation of a traditional culture may be, the student of traditional societies today finds it difficult to remain aloof from the historical changes which now permeate the world. As he talks with the bright young men of the cities, he finds considerable ambivalence regarding the value of traditional ways. He finds Ethiopians acutely conscious that their traditional life, for all its charm, has been chronically afflicted with war, pestilence, famine, and disease, and that their traditional social order has encouraged the many to toil and the few to live in idle luxury. He sees them bitter that Ethiopia has remained backward—"*wada hwāla qaratch!*"—and isolated from the great advances of the human spirit achieved elsewhere. They are anxious to enter the modern world.

And thus the aesthetic impulse is joined by the moral. The sociologist feels drawn to contribute what he can to elucidate the sometimes desperate problems faced by societies trying to make a rapid transition to modernity. In this he is inspired in part by the history of his discipline. The contrast between traditional and modern society has constituted the central substantive problem in sociology since Auguste Comte named the discipline well over a century ago, and some of the foremost proponents of sociology—notably, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim—have understood their calling to in-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[2]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[3]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rïst*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous